

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSN #0866/01 2601523
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 171523Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1612
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCQSOC/USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/USSOCOM WO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 000866

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [ES](#)

SUBJECT: FRASER VISIT HIGHLIGHTS STRONG US-GOES MILITARY
RELATIONSHIP

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: SOUTHCOM Commander General Fraser and Salvadoran President Mauricio Funes met September 3 to discuss military cooperation between the Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) and the U.S. military. They discussed the historically strong U.S. - GOES relationship; General Fraser and President Funes each expressed a desire to strengthen this relationship. One concrete measure is SOUTHCOM support to the First Lady's Women's Center ("Ciudad Mujer") Project. Funes said that while the current ruling party, the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN), and the ESAF had been enemies in the past, times have changed and the ESAF has an important role to play in meeting the today's challenges, including drug trafficking, transnational gangs and organized crime, poverty reduction, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and peacekeeping operations. Funes asked for additional training and equipment, and said that he was considering sending ESAF troops to Afghanistan, but would need the support of the Legislative Assembly. End Summary.

A CLOSE, HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP

12. (C) General Fraser said U.S. and Salvadoran military forces share a close, historical relationship, and the U.S. is looking to maintain and increase their cooperation. He noted the U.S. and ESAF currently conduct joint and combined exercises, including counternarcotics support and operations from the Cooperative Security Location (CSL) at Comalapa, and humanitarian and disaster relief missions. Fraser said the U.S. does not see a conventional military threat in Central America, but recognizes the region faces new challenges, such as illicit trafficking in drugs, arms, and people. While these threats are not traditional, the military has come to support law enforcement efforts because they have grown beyond the capacity of most police forces.

13. (C) President Funes said he wants to maintain and strengthen the U.S. - GOES relationship as well, and noted that some worried about an FMLN victory because of the rhetoric of hard-line FMLN party members. He said that he worked from the beginning to allay those fears and that the era of violent confrontation (during the 1980's) has ended. Funes said a strong relationship between the ESAF and the U.S. military is fundamental to furthering his administration's goals, and that he wants to further support counternarcotics operations. He said the National Civilian Police (PNC) is primarily responsible for counternarcotics, but the PNC needs the support of the ESAF due to the complexity and seriousness of the threat.

WE NEED SUPPORT

14. (C) Funes said his government is committed to combating drugs and arms trafficking and will continue to support the CSL. He said his government is working to enhance relationships with other USG agencies and look for ways to increase support for the ESAF. He mentioned a recent visit to the ESAF Special Forces Command where he had the chance to meet the six-man U.S. Special Forces team working with the unit. He praised their efforts and said that he would like more trainers and special equipment for the Salvadoran Special Forces unit. He noted that much of the ESAF's current equipment is obsolete because U.S. military assistance was greatly reduced after the 1992 Peace Accords. He said that the ESAF now needs to be rebuilt in order to protect the civilian population, and carry out humanitarian assistance, disaster response, and counter drug operations. He noted that the Salvadoran people trust the ESAF more than the PNC, but that the ESAF needs to be organized to support the PNC's efforts and to help reduce poverty by supporting social development programs.

15. (C) Fraser said that he had good and frank discussions with the Minister of Defense (MOD), and will continue to talk with the ESAF leadership to find ways to continue and increase the cooperation. He mentioned that the MOD asked for assistance in intelligence support and information sharing, in addition to humanitarian assistance/disaster relief and counternarcotics. He said he would continue to work to identify appropriate training and equipment for the ESAF, and noted that he works in a similar fashion with other countries in the region.

HONDURAS

16. (C) Funes said the situation in Honduras is serious and the GOES has been treating it very cautiously and staying in close consultation with the U.S. He was proud to add that El Salvador has a stronger constitution and democratic institutions. He also said that the actions/comments of the FMLN should not be mistaken as representing his administration. He said that they have different views and that party hard-liners, with ideological ties to the past, were advocating a violent confrontation if the de facto government in Honduras does not permit President Zelaya's return.

17. (C) General Fraser noted that military leaders in the region have told him that the Bolivarian movement is a problem that requires a political solution, but that the military forces are being drawn into the discussion because of the political uncertainties in many countries.

GOING FORWARD AND AFGHANISTAN

18. (C) General Fraser said he would like to invite the Minister of Defense Munguia Payes to visit SOUTHCOM Headquarters to continue discussions. President Funes said that he approved. General Fraser described his discussion with Munguia Payes regarding sending troops to Afghanistan. President Funes said it had been discussed and that they would approach it gradually, likely starting with a small site survey, then sending an observer or two, followed by posting staff officers in one of the safer areas, before ultimately deploying a unit. Still, President Funes said, these types of deployments require the support and approval of the Legislative Assembly.

19. (C) President Funes thanked General Fraser for SOUTHCOM's support for the Ciudad Mujer program and said that the ultimate goal is to build one in each El Salvador's 14 departments. Fraser said that the program is a good

opportunity to provide support via SOUTHCOM's humanitarian assistance program. (Note: On September 8, President and Mrs. Funes launched Ciudad Mujer in Usulután, and praised the contributions of SOUTHCOM and USAID in public remarks. End note.)

110. (U) This message has been cleared by General Fraser.
BLAU